

Editorial

Demonstrations

DEMONSTRATING is becoming something of a fetish amongst a section of British society (and other western societies for that matter), and it is a subject that could do with a careful sociological analysis. There is of course nothing new in demonstrations concerned with wage disputes or working conditions, but a new type of demonstration on behalf of political/social causes has recently come to the fore, and there are some ugly sides to these demonstrations. It is as well to be clear at the outset that peaceful demonstrations are a legitimate part of the paraphernalia of democracy. But repeated demonstrations on particular themes, usually organised each time by the same small caucus, have been costing the tax payer a lot of money. That is bad enough, but they have also caused the police a lot of trouble, occasional injury, and wholesale diversion from other pressing police business such as solving crimes. These days the mass media, and especially the TV, hungry for good stories, give even the most piffling demonstrations huge coverage, and naturally that encourages demonstrators. A correspondent wrote to us of a one man demonstration; liaison was arranged with TV, and the man was given nationwide coverage. Needless to say, the man in question was a well known agitator who had not previously managed to achieve such notoriety. TV reporters these days even make long trips abroad to interview exiled or self-exiled insurgents who are little better than common criminals and yet they are given vast coverage for dastardly ideas, even murder, and no doubt receive great encouragement for their evil causes. It is even said that if anyone did not know how to organise a revolution, he could soon discover by watching the right combination of TV programmes. No one wants to stop the mass media covering news, all news, but it is a pity that programme producers cannot observe more balance instead of sensationalising every little tin pot revolutionary and every long-

haired student weirdy who thinks he has discovered some great new cause. The trouble is that there are a few people, in TV particularly, who seem to take a special interest in glamorising and dramatising revolutionaries and troublemakers.

Christians are clearly enjoined in the Bible to be good citizens, to support law and order, not to stir up trouble and disorder. That is not to say Christians are always to be pro the *status quo*. History is full of examples of Christians reforming society and eradicating abuses by legitimate constitutional means. But modern demonstrations are frequently organised by pressure groups of negligible importance save for what capital they can make out of the demonstrations themselves. The pressure groups are of varying degrees of reputability, and they are nearly all known to the police. But even less reputable groups habitually join in the demonstrations causing the damage and often bringing in violence. For instance, does anyone seriously believe that the civil rights marches in Ireland were not infiltrated by professional agitators and troublemakers?

We would suggest two things with regard to demonstrations. First, some measure of control over the coverage on the mass media. No one wants censorship, but if the mass media cannot put their own house in order and achieve a reasonable balance amongst their producers, then external pressure and independent assessment will be necessary, and it is to be feared that this is becoming the case more and more in Britain. Second, we wonder if the law could not be altered in such a way as to provide heavy, and we mean heavy, penalties against those who use violence especially against the police. Some of the sentences given to students who use violence on demonstrations are wholly inadequate and simply make a mockery of the law.

And further, democracy ought to protect spontaneous expressions of opinion, but ought it to protect professional agitators? Perhaps one way of dealing with such people would be to make those who promote demonstrations provide financial indemnity for any damage caused in the demonstration, and if they did not, make it just as much an offence as driving a car without insurance.

Law and Order

FOR many years citizens in Britain have enjoyed social and political stability, and a maximum of civil liberty. Broadly speaking the same is true of the English-speaking world. Such a situation has come about through the character of the people concerned, shaped in no small measure by the Bible and the Christian Faith. Stability and well ordered government have been a great blessing, and citizens have believed it right to uphold civil authority even when they were not wholly in sympathy with Governments of the day. Britain, America,

and Australasia have not known the frequent and regular *coup d'état* sequences that characterise the Middle East or parts of South America, but have the English speaking nations taken their stability too much for granted? Have their democratic principles gone sour on them? Are demonstrators and civil rights merchants turning a free society into an anarchical society? Law and order promises to be an election issue in Britain. It is not our policy to enter into political arguments except where there are clear Christian principles at stake. But here there certainly are. Paul makes clear in Romans 13 (and plenty of other NT passages support his argument there) that government is ordained of God, and that it is for the benefit of not just Christians but men generally. Paul was not writing against a background of western Christendom or even of OT Judaism but against a background of secular heathen Roman rule. But some politicians apart, we now find a radical like Canon Eric James of Southwark attacking the slogan of law and order. There is a growing craze in ecumenical circles today to speak and write of a Christian theology of revolution, to regard the western tradition of a support for law, order and good government as stuffy, old fashioned, and simply a *laissez faire* defence of the *status quo*.

It is certainly true that the NT dynamic is revolutionary. Christ breaks into men's lives and transforms them. They are revolutionised, possessed by the Spirit. Christians are new men in Christ. All that is revolutionary, but it is a Spirit-created revolution within men's lives. If it is a true spiritual revolution, it will soon become obvious to outsiders and will have an effect in the living and thinking of those so revolutionised. But this is a very different kind of revolution from that advocated by these avant garde enthusiasts. The NT contains nothing to encourage Christians to join every revolutionary movement going. Indeed it is very evident that Jesus avoided the Zealots and those who would make him a political messiah. As any reader can observe from the Acts 5: 36 incident of the revolutionary Theudas (and the very naturalness of Luke's reference to Theudas will tell the reader not familiar with Jewish history that Theudas was by no means an isolated revolutionary, see Acts 21: 38), Christians were sometimes mistaken for political revolutionaries, but the NT nowhere gives any countenance to dramatic political agitations. Slavery was an obvious moral issue, and to judge by some Christians currently advocating social revolutions, one should expect the NT to be full of Christian demonstrations demanding the abolition of slavery and the boycotting of any who had anything to do with slavery. Yet we find nothing of the kind in the NT, and in fact certain submission passages which even suggest the contrary. We doubt if it is a fair inference to say that the NT supports slavery, though that case has been argued by a few Christians in the past. It was of course Christians who took the lead in the abolition of slavery campaigns. The point is that in abolition the Christian social conscience *gradually* made its presence felt.

All this does not amount to a plea for Christians to keep out of politics. That is neither right nor possible for the mature Christian who takes his responsibilities seriously. Those who think they can solve problems by just repeating the shibboleth that Christians should keep out of politics and stick to the Gospel are naive and only show what a narrow view they hold of the Gospel. No help comes from such a slogan, but equally on the other side those who realise belatedly that they have not taken social responsibility carefully enough must not rush out madly in Gadarene fashion and follow every fashionable revolutionary bandwagon, imagining in the process that they are living out the Christian Gospel of revolution. Christian opinion will vary about particular causes and even demonstrations, but we believe that political activity against law and order, bordering on the subversive, is wrong and against the biblical ethic.

Today only the wilder elements want violent demonstrations, and there can be few if any Christians advocating that. But is it not rather naive of some Christians to advocate peaceful demonstrations, knowing full well that they will be infiltrated by the usual subversive elements, professional and semi-professional agitators who turn up everywhere in the second or third day of any demonstration of any size. The bigger it is, the more anxious such people are to get in on the act. What about the trouble and expense such demonstrations cause to the police and the taxpayers and the damage to property? Can responsible Christians ignore this? It is well known that one of the standard tactics of these demonstrators is to goad the police into some minor and very normal reaction, and then shout loudly about police brutality and how someone was beaten up. Of course any such alleged, or more likely trumped up, incident is given maximum publicity and all the friendly journalists and mass media men are informed, sometimes even in advance!

Apartheid

NOW that CND and Banning the Bomb are not fashionable causes, South African sportsmen seem to have become the target of attack. As frequently most of the demonstrators for this type of cause are not the man in the street who is usually irritated by their antics, but those who come from comfortable middle class homes (another area of needed sociological research). Some prominent churchmen have been involved in anti-apartheid demonstrations. Bishop Trevor Huddleston whose attitude and whose political views are now well known (he recently appeared on the platform of a 'Students for a Labour Victory' rally), and also newcomers like the Archbishop of Wales and the new Bishop of Woolwich, David Sheppard. The sincerity of these people must be respected, but let it be unmistakably clear that they speak for

themselves only and not for Christians generally. Many Christians believe them totally mistaken. It is very easy to sit back in a comfortable British armchair and condemn apartheid. It is a lot harder to know what to do in South Africa, granted the historical situation in that part of the world. It is easy to wax eloquent about the tragedy of Nigeria and not to recognise the peace and prosperity of southern Africa in which black Africans have certainly had some share.

We have considerable doubts about many of the current demonstration causes, whether it be students and their files, Ulster civil rights (an increasingly discredited cause which the dismissal of two Eire cabinet ministers has started to put into proper perspective), or anti-Vietnam and Cambodia wars. But the particular cause currently dividing churchmen (and others) is the South African cricket tour of England which will be just about starting when this issue is published. The British Council of Churches, predictably, came out against the tour but then anyone who knows the record of foolish BBC political pontifications knows how much attention to pay to that body, and in any case all it represents in reality is the caucus of its constituent bureaucrats plus a few others. But Bishop David Sheppard's movement to stop the tour is a different matter since that is supported by those who speak for themselves, whose sincerity is not in doubt, and who obviously care. First, we ask what they think they will achieve in S. Africa. No doubt they would reply, a protest against apartheid, racism, and a team selected on racial lines. That may satisfy their consciences, but will they really further their cause? Will they do anything at all by trying to drive South Africans into isolation? Will they not provoke a very considerable hostility amongst ordinary people, not excluding churchmen, who are utterly fed up and nauseated by demonstrations, by disrupting sporting activities, and who are alas likely to be less sympathetic to David Sheppard's cause and coloured people in general in consequence?

Second, is demonstrating against the South African tour on its own consistent, if indeed sport is to be used in this way at all? Is Bishop Sheppard going to demonstrate against Rhodesians for their UDI, USA for its South East Asia involvements, Greece for her political imprisonments, Communist countries for their bestial treatment of minorities, and so on? Where is the end of all this? It is not a very convincing answer to say that he is simply demonstrating against a team selected on racial grounds. He is really against apartheid. He might just as easily find himself demonstrating against Americans (if they played cricket) because Government policy forced them to exclude admirable young men simply because they were fighting a war elsewhere and a war which many deplore. Our support goes to the MCC for a courageous decision to which we hope they will adhere, ignoring the protests of Sheppard and his friends, for we do not think they will achieve anything in practice except to make things worse both here and in South Africa, and we doubt if using sport for political demonstrations

is capable of consistent behaviour without totally disrupting international sport. Is it not wiser to accept the South African cricketers graciously and seek to influence them and their government?

Deeper questions

FIRST, there is the major issue of apartheid itself. It is not our concern to argue the pros and cons here, for we have not space. But we want to plead for a realistic and informed understanding of the South African situation. Any fool can (and plenty do!) sit in his cosy armchair and condemn the wickedness of the South Africans without information or knowledge. Issuing such condemnations, joining demonstrations, and signing petitions have become a sort of social-conscience-escapism for quite a few middle class comfortable home youngsters these days, and the sociology of this may prove significant in the last analysis. Any fool can repeat the patter of Mr. Brutus or young Mr. Hain. Any fool can mouth platitudes about racism, or on a more sophisticated level (not really much more sophisticated) rehash some of the many angled anti-South African pamphlets and paperbacks. But this is not enough for a responsible Christian. He must know the facts and hear the other side before judging. It is greatly to be feared that very few do hear the facts. The very fact that the South African Government contains a high proportion of Christians does not mean that they are right, but it ought to make the intelligent pause and consider their case. Even if we conclude that apartheid is wrong, and we are emphatically not arguing that case one way or the other here, what precisely is to be done in the present circumstances of South Africa? Vague condemnations and vague sentiments help no one in these matters. Each country must start from its inherited position. None of us can put the world back to Eden for a fresh start. Each nation has to live with its history. Our plea here is not for condemnation of South African cricketers and their tour, but against wild emotionalism as seen in the innuendoes of Nazism such as the Bishop of Southwark made against the Bishop of Peterborough in *The Times* recently (that in itself shows the level of emotional banter to which the debate often drops), and for a fair attempt to understand apartheid and what the real alternatives are. Then but only then ought Christians to pronounce judgment. Alas how rarely is that the case.

Second, David Sheppard himself is prominent as a former Test cricketer, and that must give anything he says on these matters an immediate news value. But he is also known to most church people as an Evangelical bishop (probably the only Evangelical bishop in England currently holding a see, though we are not going to argue here about precise labels). There are many churchmen who honestly do not believe that Evangelicals can be good bishops. A little of this may be pure anti-evangelicalism, but mostly churchmen fear that Evangelicals

are too intransigent to make bishops of mixed dioceses. Thus inevitably eyes are on David Sheppard to see what he will make of that very difficult south London area of Woolwich. Everyone knows what a colourful occupant of the see his predecessor was. A very heavy onus is now on him to see whether his Evangelical theology and insights can make an impact on that area. Some of the things he said and wrote when his appointment was first announced were hardly encouraging. A bishop-elect who announced that he does not want to have anything to do with the establishment makes some wonder if he ought not to have declined the invitation to the see, and makes others wonder if he may not fulfil the worst fears of 'Evangelical' pietism. We hope that we are wrong; time alone will show. But we cannot but hope that he will prove himself a good over-shepherd in Woolwich rather than a divider of the wider Christian flock by political agitations.

Current Church Affairs

THE summer session of Church Assembly, the last of that body before it is replaced by the new General Synod, contains at least two major items on its agenda. The first is what remains of the Rochester report on the structuring of the new synod. The Rochester report proposed *inter alia* a restricted Standing Committee with a very powerful and almost totally non-elected executive committee under it with very wide executive and policy powers. Alongside this were to be four powerful executives called Commissioners, but now commonly known after one Assembly speech as Commissars. The whole thing was a mixture of Orwell, the Kremlin, and current church bureaucracy. It was scarcely surprising that the Assembly received the report with considerable hostility, and the Bishop of Rochester at once threw in his hand, withdrawing without even a vote. What will happen in its place remains to be seen, but it is devoutly to be hoped that bureaucratic planners will have seen the red light, and follow the Bishop of Durham's advice in having a much wider and properly elected Standing Committee. Another Rochester proposal was the virtual handing over of the Church of England Board of Social Responsibility to the British Council of Churches, the former merely advising the latter. In our view this would be unmitigated disaster, and simply capitulation by a body which has an admirable record of good work with impartiality in the political field to one which has a poor record of unrepresentative statements and very obvious political bias.

Also on the agenda is an umbrella debate on Broadcasting and a request for a Commission to investigate this. The subject is immensely complicated involving structures—who controls productions and their moral thrust, particular problems of violence, sex, etc., and specific issues like the open and shut approaches to religious broadcasting. There is certainly concern about the social, moral and political impact

of TV whether it comes from Vice-President Spiro Agnew in USA or from Mary Whitehouse's humble supporters in the UK. It can scarcely be doubted that the enormous publicity of TV has its effect on demonstrations and agitations of which we wrote above. TV affects not only the planning of demonstrations but also the content of them, and anyone knows that something spectacular or violent will attract the camera team, and of course a camera team is not ungrateful for a tip off so that it can get a scoop and not arrive when the poor police are trying to clear up the mess. TV is plainly in need of control if it cannot improve its self-discipline, but the problem is how to do this without cramping legitimate freedom of producers (their general freedom is greatly overdone, hence the word legitimate is used advisedly) and without imposing a censorship, which no one wants. The answer is plainly self-discipline but there are only slight signs of this being imposed at the moment.

God's World

THIS is the title of O. R. Johnston's study-guide to the Board of Social Responsibility's report *Man in His Living Environment*. Mr. Johnston, who is one of *The Churchman's* reviewers and a member of Church Assembly, has written an eight page leaflet designed for use in church and educational study circles. *God's World* is published by the Marcham Manor Press, price 1s. for cash with order, and discounts on quantities. Mr. Johnston provides a general introduction on creation perfect as God made it, creation fallen as a result of man's sin, and creation in need of redemption. He then turns to summary factual information on specific topics—pollution, population control, man's abuse of the animals and the land. There are plenty of questions for discussion and a short bibliography. For churches or study circles seeking to widen their horizons this inexpensive and popular leaflet should be of value, and it is of course specially relevant for Conservation Year 1970.

Our Methodist friends

IF anyone doubts the dangers in any large and comprehensive church of allowing the major organs of communications to be controlled from the one centre, events within Methodism since the union scheme should prove a salutary reminder. The *Methodist Recorder*, the only Methodist weekly, is the chief culprit. We have mentioned its activities earlier, and now it appears from the March 1970 issue of *The Voice* that it has been suppressing dissentient views again. Readers may have seen some short notices in the national press about a legal case. It appears from this number of *The Voice* that the *Recorder* has badly misrepresented the facts of the case, and refused to print a letter

from the solicitor involved on the other side. What is worse is that some Methodists have acted on the basis of the *Recorder's* false impressions, have passed condemnatory resolutions on the basis of wrong facts, and have even in certain cases started discriminating against other dissentients in no way involved. If this report is correct, the editor of the *Recorder* has a great deal to answer for. Those who want to know the facts of this matter should get the March 1970 copy from the new editor of *The Voice* at 40 Kendal Road West, Holcombe Brook, Bury, Lancs., BL0 9SY.

The new editor is Mr. B. Kingston Soper who has taken over after Dr. Oliver Beckerlegge had heroically and almost singlehandedly launched *The Voice* and produced its first 32 issues. Dr. Beckerlegge, whom we value as a *Churchman* reviewer, has had to hand over *The Voice* upon taking over the revived *Methodist Magazine*, John Wesley's own paper. Readers of *The Churchman* ought to support and commend this new venture of a revived Methodist Magazine, for it is the oldest evangelical periodical, is committed to the very necessary task of healing the wounds the union scheme has already made in Methodism, and is an independent evangelical journal. Sample copies can be had for 1s. 6d. from the distribution manager, 6 Merrybower Road, Salford 7, Lancs.

New English Bible

THE completion of the OT and Apocrypha sections of the New English Bible is a notable event in modern Bible publishing history. In this number we include a review of the linguistic and theological side of the NEB, and later we plan to cover the literary aspect. It is appropriate that OUP's senior and experienced staff member Mr. Geoffrey Hunt should publish a little book about how it all happened. He packs a lot of information into 83 pages in *About the New English Bible* (OUP, 6s.) describing the NEB's history and origins, the method of working, the progress towards completion, and a number of details varying from the method of printing, to footnotes, to chapter headings. The only point where we have had nagging doubts all the way through the NEB is the question of language and behind it the theological problem of communication. It is all very well for clergy and schoolmasters, who find the going hard in Bible teaching, to plead for something in contemporary language which their audience can understand. But left like that such a statement is a facile oversimplification of the problem. No doubt the literary experts can help, but the root of the problem remains theological. How is modern twentieth century unregenerate man ever going to understand the realities of God's revelation? Anyone who imagines that this is just a literary and linguistic matter has a very inadequate doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Is the translator to demythologise, for that is what he will have to do,

if he is to get the Bible into the ordinary language of the secularised twentieth century? Is that part of a translator's work or is that to be left to the interpreters? The NT section of the NEB never seemed quite sure when it came to the heavily theological passages like Romans, though on the whole those NT translators moved into the realm of interpretation. The question does not arise in the same form in a largely narrative book like Acts or many of the OT historical passages. Or is the translator to stick firmly and strictly to his text, eschew interpretation leaving that to the teacher and the preacher, and simply leave the great biblical terms which are very plainly *sui generis* to the interpreter and ultimately to the enlightening powers of the Spirit of God. We are not so rash here as to imagine that we can solve the problem of communication here, but it is important to identify the nature of the problem. It is emphatically not just a question of finding the right language, as a great many people seem to imagine. As in the Bible, so in liturgy, communication involves both linguistics and theology. In an otherwise excellent book we could not quite escape the suspicion that even Mr. Hunt in his section on page 9, *The Purpose of the NEB*, does not quite focus the problem aright.

Editorial Footnote

SINCE this editorial was written, a general election has been announced, and Government pressure has forced the MCC to cancel the S. African cricket tour. Neither fact alters our views, but on the latter two things are to be said. First, we utterly deplore this Government pressure and the more so since the Government had earlier said that it would not intervene. Dragging politics into sport can only lead to catastrophe for sport. Second, the cancellation represents a victory not for anti-racialism, as is claimed, but ultimately for thuggery and anarchy. Thuggery in that a small minority (opinion polls show that) by threatening demonstrations on a vast scale with the inevitable disorderly (and worse) consequences have apparently forced the Government's hands. Our earlier comments on law and order are very pertinent here.

It is significant that a non-white S. African cricketer like Basil D'Oliviera wanted the tour to go on, the only strongly anti-apartheid S. African white MP urged that it should continue, an East African Christian paper like *Target*, once it was freed from the influence of a certain clergyman now returned to England, has recognised that ostracising S. Africa is a mistaken policy, and a Christian Sikh like Harbans Singh Sandhu has announced his support for Mr. Enoch Powell's views. In the face of all this middle class English moralists constantly tell us what is good for S. African non-whites. It is a situation crying out for sociological, possibly even psychological, analysis. We do not doubt the integrity of these 'liberals', but we do doubt their wisdom, and if there is a vigorous reaction against coloured people, leaders like David Sheppard will have a lot to answer for.